is pending;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how much time the Board of Arbitration is expected to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) No, Sir. (b) and (c) Docs not arise.

Public Distribution System

1946. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Public Distribution System was evolved mainly to insulate the poor against rise of prices of essential commodities;

(b) whether it is also a fact that today all income groups, both rich and poor enjoy the subsidies provided on items such as foodgrains, sugar edible oils and kerosene and as a result thereof, the persons below poverty line have to suffer a lot;

(c) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether Government propose to eliminate the higher income group people from the benefits of Public Distribution System and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) to (d) The Public Distribution System has evolved from being a "rationing" system for the distribution of scarce commodities to a fair price" system for moderating open market prices and for facilitating food security at the household level. As per the present policy of the Central Government coverage of PDS is universal in nature. However, in order to improve the reach of the PDS to the chronical!) food deficit regions of the country where a large number of the population below the poverty line live, the Central Government is issuing foodgrains meant for distribution in areas identified under the Revamped Public Distribution System at specially subsidised prices which are Rs. 50 per quintal lower than the Central Issue Prices for normal PDS areas. Operational responsibility for implementation of the Public Distribution System including determination of the eligibility criteria, scales of entitlement, etc. rest with the State Governments. Some State Governments have excluded certain affluent categories of consumers from the supply of PDS foodgrains. Some other State Governments have system of issuing foodgrains at specially subsidised prices to the poor households identified by them. A Committee of Ministers constituted by the Advisory Council on PDS to formulate recommendations on a National Policy on PDS has recommended that it is imperative that certain affluent categories of persons are excluded from access to PDS foodgrains in order to ensure larger and more meaningful quantities of foodgrains to the really needy and deserving sections of the society. The Advisory Council on PDS which considered the Report of the Committee of Ministers decided that the matter would need to be discussea further with the State Governments through the forum of the National Development Council.

Policy to ensure PDS supplies reaching target population

1947. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have finalised a "foolproof policy" to ensure that foodgrains and other essential commodities covered under PDS reach the target population at reasonable prices;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and